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tagiously cheerful spirit is prized highly and receives extra good treatment. The season's success, however, turns only partially on the energy and skill of the men. The fluctuations of the market are pure chance as far as the men are concerned, and the success of the catch is an equally incalculable factor. The weather has also to be considered, for in storms it is impossible to dive, and the "forty-day northwest wind," so called, is likely to take a large number of days out of the working calendar.

The pearl banks stretch for miles and miles in the shallow waters of the Persian Gulf. Occasionally pearl-bearing oysters may be found where the water is so shallow that the very low tides of the first and middle of each lunar month leave the bottom of the sea quite uncovered. However, most of the diving is done in water that is at least four fathoms or twenty-four feet deep. Deeper than fifteen fathoms, that is to say ninety feet, no one dives, and the Arabs insist that at greater depth no pearl-bearing oysters are found. Any rocky bottom between these two limits of depths is suitable territory in which to hunt for pearls. Certain banks are noted as affording good hunting, but most of the season's fishing partakes largely of the nature of exploration and guesswork, trying here and trying there in localities where the catch is reported as good. The number of diving boats at work is large, but the territory available is vast and there is no crowding. The banks are scattered along the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf for perhaps three hundred miles, so the opportunity for each boat is ample.

[423] These banks are as free as the air. No one exercises any control over them, nor claims the privilege of charging rent for their use. The nominal tax of a diver's share